

## **Minnesota Public Radio News and Humphrey Institute Poll**

### **Dayton Holds Double-Digit Lead Over Emmer and Late Trends May Favor Democrat**

Report prepared by the Center for the Study of Politics and Governance  
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According the latest Minnesota Public Radio News and Humphrey Institute Poll, the Democratic Party's gubernatorial candidate Mark Dayton has opened a 12 point lead over the Republican Party candidate Tom Emmer, 41% to 29%. This represents a distinct shift from the deadlock that existed at the end of August. The Independence Party candidate is receiving 11% support with 20% not having settled on any candidate.

#### **Dayton Stabilizes Lead**

	<b>Dayton</b>	<b>Emmer</b>	<b>Horner</b>	<b>DK / Refused/Other/Won't Vote</b>
<b>October 21-25</b>	41%	29%	11%	20%
<b>September 22-29</b>	38%	27%	16%	20%
<b>August 25-29</b>	34%	34%	13%	19%

Some key findings:

- Dayton's lead rests on engaging Democrats, broadening his coalition more than Emmer, his economic populism, and localizing the election to capitalize on the unpopularity of Governor Tim Pawlenty.
- Dayton has the advantage among voters who are leaning toward a candidate but his support is not as firm as Emmer's and Horner's support is soft.
- Emmer's greatest opportunity is to reframe the election as a national referendum on President Barack Obama and the nation's direction.

The survey was conducted of 751 likely voters in Minnesota between October 21 and October 25, 2010. The margin of error ranges between +/-3.6 percentage points based on the conventional calculation and +/-5.5 percentage points, which is a more cautious

estimate based on professional best practices. For smaller subgroups the margin of sampling error is larger. The section at the end of this report, “About the Survey,” discusses the statistical calculations for the margin of sampling error and how to interpret it.

### **How Dayton Moved Ahead**

There are four factors that explain Dayton’s lead, many of which defy patterns in other states around the country.

**Democrats Engaged:** Although Republicans around the country appear far more inclined to vote in the 2010 elections than dispirited Democrats, the story is quite different in Minnesota. Among those who are extremely or very enthusiastic about the election, Democrats are matching Republicans (50% of those who say they are extremely or very enthusiastic about the election are Democrats and 46% are Republicans). Indeed, Democrats have an edge among voters who compare their enthusiasm for this year’s gubernatorial race against the 2006 contest between Governor Tim Pawlenty and the Democratic candidate Mike Hatch (52% of those who are more enthusiastic about this year’s election than the 2006 election are Democrats and 38% are Republicans).

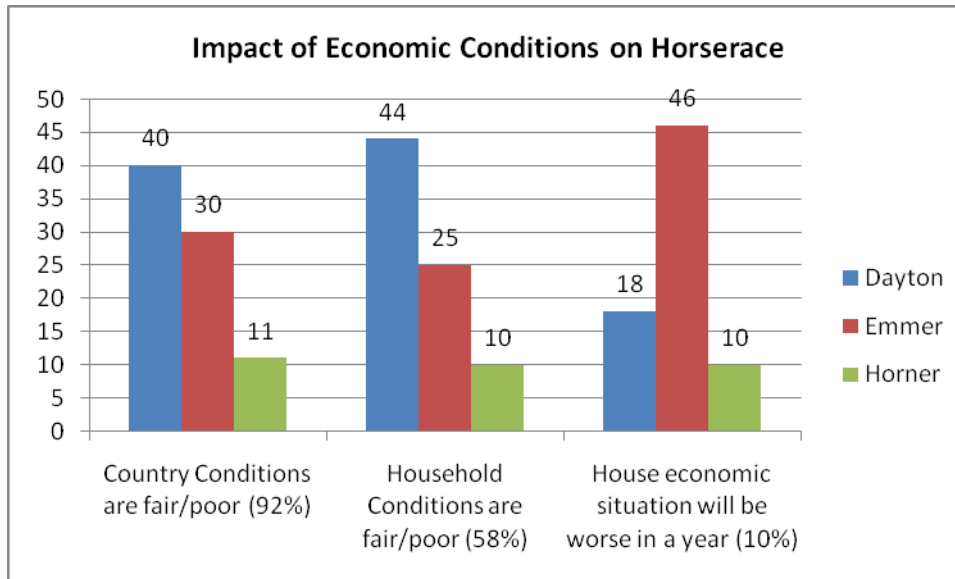
**Dayton Coalition: Dayton has been more effective in constructing a broad coalition of key voting groups.** He has more successfully rallied Democrats while still attracting more independents, and he enjoys substantial advantages among women (23 points) and voters earning less than \$50,000 a year (34 points). Horner is hurting Emmer a bit more than Dayton by drawing 11% from Republicans compared to 7% among Democrats.

### **Dayton Builds Broader Coalition**

	<b>Dayton</b>	<b>Emmer</b>	<b>Horner</b>
Republican	7%	68%	11%
Independent	23%	13%	23%
Democratic	77%	2%	7%
Men	35%	34%	12%
Women	47%	24%	10%
Annual Income Less than \$50,000	54%	20%	8%
Annual Income More than \$50,000	35%	36%	12%

**Economic Populism: The Great Recession is powerfully impacting Minnesota politics in ways that help Dayton.** The astounding 92% of likely voters who believe that the national economy is in poor shape are breaking for the Democratic gubernatorial candidate Mark Dayton over his Republican rival Tom Emmer by 10 points (40% to 30%). Among the 58% percent of likely voters who report that their own household economic situation is in poor shape, Dayton boasts a 19% point advantage (44% versus

25% for Emmer). By contrast, Emmer enjoys a 28 point margin (46% to 18%) among voters worried about their family's future economic conditions. The problem for Emmer is that only 10 percent expect their household situations to worsen over the coming year.



The economy and jobs are the dominant concern of Minnesota voters (42%) and it works best for Dayton – he enjoys a 5 point advantage (40% to 35%). By contrast, Emmer enjoys a whopping 39 point advantage (56% to 17%) on abortion but only 2% of voters are concerned about it as a top problem facing the state.

#### **Voters Focused on Economy and Jobs**

	<b>Single Most Important Problem Facing Minnesota Today</b>
Economy and Jobs	42%
Budget Deficit	13
Education	14
High Taxes	9
Health Care	10
Immigration	2
Gay Marriage	2
Abortion	2
Transportation	1

(Percentages here and elsewhere may not sum to 100% owing to rounding or to the omission of respondents who did not answer a question.)

**Localization of Election:** A key question about the 2010 election is whether it would focus on national politics (which hurts Democrats) or on state policy where local issues and personalities come into play. **Unlike other states, the gubernatorial election in Minnesota has focused on local issues.** Dayton's economic populism has dominated the debate. In addition, more voters disapprove than approve of Governor Pawlenty's job performance (50% versus 41%) and they are breaking decisively for Dayton by a 66% to 7% margin.

#### **Dayton Benefits from Pawlenty Backlash**

	<b>Dayton</b>	<b>Emmer</b>	<b>Horner</b>
Disapproval of Governor Pawlenty's job performance (50% of likely voters)	66%	7%	9%

#### **Campaign's Last Week: Dayton Advantage and Questions**

The last week of the 2010 campaign will answer important questions, some of which we can tease out. One in 5 voters (19%) indicate that they do not know which candidate they will vote for or they refused to state their choice, raising the possibility of a last minute shift that could change the outcome of the raise.

It appears, though, that Dayton will more than hold his own as voters make up their minds. Six out of 10 undecided voters are leaning toward one candidate and Dayton is the most favored. Among voters leaning toward a candidate, 30% support Dayton as opposed to 13% who favor Emmer and 13% who are tilting to Horner. Once the leanings of voters are taken into account, Dayton's lead grows to 16% (47% versus 31%) and the number of truly undecided numbers 9%.

#### **Leaners Favor Dayton**

	<b>Dayton</b>	<b>Emmer</b>	<b>Horner</b>	<b>DK/Refused</b>
Leaning of voters who did not indicate which candidate they supported (19%)	30%	13%	13%	40%

There are two critical questions that remain and may still impact the race. First, Horner's support is soft, with 43% of Horner voters indicating that they may change their vote. If voters defect from Horner and they are predominantly Republican, this will impact the race. In addition, Dayton's support is softer than Emmer's; 86% of the Republican's supporters are certain of their choice as compared to 78% of Dayton's.

#### **Emmer Support Firmest and Horner's Most Soft**

	Certain of Choice	May Change Choice
Dayton voters	78%	20%
Emmer voters	86%	13%
Horner voters	55%	43%

**Effect of Obama Visit:** Obama's visit to Minnesota on October 23<sup>rd</sup> and the resulting press coverage did increase support for Dayton. Among the 379 likely Minnesota voters who were surveyed on October 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> (the 2 days before Obama's visit), 40% support Dayton. By contrast, among the 145 likely Minnesota voters who were surveyed on October 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> (the 2 days after Obama's visit) 53% support Dayton. This increase in support for Dayton could be a trend that will hold until Election Day, or it could be a temporary blip that will dissipate in the final days of the campaign and perhaps diminish his support.

#### **Emmer Opportunities**

The Emmer campaign has several significant opportunities to gain ground even as the campaign winds down. Casting the gubernatorial election as a referendum on Washington offered advantages for the Republican ticket.

Fifty-eight percent of voters are convinced that the country is heading off on the wrong track rather than moving in the right direction and they break by 25 points for Emmer (46% to 21 for Dayton). In addition, the 44% who disapprove of President Obama's job performance break decisively for Emmer by a 58% to 11% margin (50% approve of the President's performance). The challenge for the Emmer campaign is that the campaign is winding down as is the opportunity to recast the choice facing voters.

#### **Emmer Helped by Backlash Against Obama and Country's Direction**

	Dayton	Emmer	Horner
Country Heading Off on Wrong Track (58% of likely voters)	21%	46%	13%
Disapproval of President Obama's job performance (44% of likely voters)	11%	58%	11%

## About the Survey

This survey is a collaboration between Minnesota Public Radio News and the Center for the Study of Politics and Governance at the University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs. The survey was analyzed by the Center. The research team was Lawrence R. Jacobs (Center Director) and Joanne M. Miller (Associate Professor, Department of Political Science). Charles Gregory provided research assistance.

The survey was fielded by the Information Specialists Group (ISG) and is based on a landline random digit dial survey in Minnesota. ISG called a sample of telephone exchanges that was randomly selected by a computer from a list of active residential exchanges within Minnesota. Within each exchange, random digits were added to form a complete telephone number, thus permitting access to both listed and unlisted numbers. Within each household, one adult was selected to be the respondent for the survey.

As is common with public opinion surveys, the data were weighted. In the first stage, the data were weighted based on the number of potential survey respondents and the number of landline telephone numbers in the household. In the second stage, data were weighted according to cell phone usage, as well as gender, age, race, and Hispanic ethnicity to approximate the demographic characteristics of the population according to the Census.

Results are based on a model that accounts for the likelihood of a respondent voting based on the following factors: self-reported probability of voting in the upcoming election, voting in the 2006 gubernatorial election as reported by the respondent, interest in the 2010 election, and whether the respondent reported being registered to vote. The general model projects a turnout of 58%. A model that projects a turnout of 71% yielded similar results.

The key characteristics of the sample's likely voters in Minnesota are the following:

	<b>Likely Voters</b>
<b>Republican</b>	38%
<b>Independent</b>	16%
<b>Democrat</b>	45%
<b>Men</b>	47%
<b>Women</b>	53%
<b>High School or less or Some College</b>	52%
<b>College Graduate or Postgraduate Training</b>	48%
<b>Less than \$50,000</b>	41%
<b>More than \$50,000</b>	59%

(Percentages here and above may round to higher than 100% due to rounding.)

Party identification percentages are calculated by first asking respondents: “Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what?” Respondents who identify as an Independent or as a member of another party, as well as those who say “I don’t know” or refused to answer the question, were asked a follow-up question: “Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican Party or Democratic Party or neither?” Respondents who think of themselves as closer to the Republican Party are counted as Republicans and those who think of themselves as closer to the Democratic Party are counted as Democrats. The only respondents who are counted as Independents are those who say that they do not lean toward one of the two major parties.

751 likely voters living in Minnesota were interviewed by telephone October 21 and October 25, 2010. The margin of error ranges between  $\pm 3.6$  percentage points based on the conventional calculation and  $\pm 5.5$  percentage points, which is a more cautious estimate that takes into account design effects in accordance with professional best practices. The conventional calculation of the margin of sampling error is primarily based on the number of respondents and, critically, assumes that all respondents selected for interviewing were actually reached. No public opinion survey successfully contacts the entire sample and therefore the professional best practice is to adjust for the actual response rate and for other design effects, producing a higher margin of sampling error. In this report, we use the conventional calculation to determine the minimal level of significance and the more cautious calculation to reach a higher level of confidence in the results.

Using the design-effect calculation of the margin of sample error, in 19 cases out of 20 the results among Minneapolis voters will differ (in theory) by no more than  $\pm 5.5$  percentage points in either direction from what would have been obtained by interviewing all likely voters in the election. The response rate is 29 percent (based on AAPOR response rate calculation 4).

The results of properly conducted scientific surveys of candidate support estimate the most probable relative positions at the time of the interviewing. The margin of error indicates a range of support with unequal probabilities of accuracy. For example, assume a poll reports that Candidate A received 55% and Candidate B received 45% of support with a margin of error of  $\pm 5$  percentage points. Based on normal sampling distribution, the 55% to 45% result is the best or most probable standing at the time of the survey. Taking into account the margin of sampling error, however, we can estimate the lower boundary of support for Candidate A as 50% and the upper boundary of support for Candidate B as 50%. These results are possible but are less probable.

In addition to sampling error, the practical difficulties of conducting any survey of public opinion may introduce sources of error into the poll. Variations in the wording and order of questions, for example, may lead to somewhat different results.

This survey invested considerable resources in a set of procedures to reduce distortions. The sample of interviewees was drawn using comprehensive lists of phone exchanges. In addition, the interviewers were carefully trained and monitored to maintain consistency in implementing the questionnaire. Further, several steps were used to capture as much of the sample as possible including call backs to numbers when no one appeared to be at home or when the initial request to conduct the interview was not accepted.



## Questions

1. Suppose that the election for Governor of Minnesota were being held today. Would you vote for: [READ CHOICES 1-3] [ROTATE]

- 1 Republican Tom Emmer [GO TO Q1b]
- 2 Democrat Mark Dayton [GO TO Q1b]
- 3 Independence Party candidate Tom Horner [GO TO Q1b]
- 4 Other (SPECIFY) (VOL) [GO TO Q1a]
- 5 Won't vote in race (vol) [GO TO Q2]
- 8 Don't Know (vol) [GO TO Q1a]
- 9 Refused (vol) [GO TO Q1a]

[KEEP ORDER OF CHOICES 1-3 IN Q1a THE SAME AS IN Q1]

1a. Are you leaning more toward: [READ CHOICES 1-3]

- 1 Republican Tom Emmer [GO TO Q2]
- 2 Democrat Mark Dayton [GO TO Q2]
- 3 Independence Party candidate Tom Horner [GO TO Q2]
- 4 Other (SPECIFY) (VOL) [GO TO Q2]
- 8 Don't Know (vol) [GO TO Q2]
- 9 Refused (vol) [GO TO Q2]

1b. Are you certain that you will vote for <INSERT ANSWER TO Q1 HERE> for governor, or do you think you may change your mind between now and the November election?

- 1 Certain
- 2 May change mind
- 8 Don't know (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

2. Generally speaking, how much interest would you say you have in the November general election, a great deal, a fair amount, only a little, or no interest at all?

- Great deal.....1
- Fair amount .....2
- Only a little .....3
- No interest at all .....4
- Don't know (vol).....8
- Refused(vol).....9

How likely is it that you will vote in November's general election? Would you say you definitely WILL vote, probably WILL, probably WON'T or definitely WON'T vote in the November general election?

- Definitely will.....1
- Probably will.....2
- Probably won't .....3
- Definitely won't .....4

Don't know (vol).....8  
 Refused(vol).....9

Which ONE of the following issues do you think is the single MOST important problem facing Minnesota today: (ROTATE THE FIRST CHOICES) (READ TOP 9 CHOICES) (PROBE IF NECESSARY for SINGLE MOST important issue)

Transportation ..... 1  
 The economy and jobs ..... 2  
 Education ..... 3  
 Health Care ..... 4  
 Immigration..... 5  
 The Budget Deficit..... 6  
 High Taxes ..... 7  
 Gay Marriage ..... 8  
 Abortion ..... 9  
 Or something else (SPECIFY) (vol) ..... 80 O  
 Don't Know (vol) ..... 88  
 Refused (vol) ..... 99

Generally speaking, how enthusiastic are you about the upcoming election for governor?  
 (READ CHOICES 1-5)

1 Extremely enthusiastic  
 2 Very enthusiastic  
 3 Somewhat enthusiastic  
 4 Not too enthusiastic  
 5 Not enthusiastic at all  
 8 Don't know (vol)  
 9 Refused (vol)

Compared to the 2006 election for governor of Minnesota, when the candidates were Tim Pawlenty and Mike Hatch, are you more enthusiastic about this election or less enthusiastic?

1 More enthusiastic  
 2 Less enthusiastic  
 3 Same (vol)  
 8 Don't know/Didn't pay attention to 2006 election (vol)  
 9 Refused (vol)

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Tim Pawlenty is handling his job as governor?

1 Approve  
 2 Disapprove  
 8 Don't Know (vol)  
 9 Refused (vol)

Generally speaking, would you say things in Minnesota are heading in the right direction, or are they off on the wrong track?

- 1 Right Direction
- 2 Wrong Track
- 8 Don't Know (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

Generally speaking, would you say things in this country are heading in the right direction, or are they off on the wrong track?

- 1 Right Direction
- 2 Wrong Track
- 8 Don't Know (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as President?

- 1 Approve
- 2 Disapprove
- 8 Don't Know (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

How would you rate economic conditions in this country today?  
(READ CHOICES 1-4)

- 1 Excellent
- 2 Good
- 3 Fair
- 4 Poor
- 8 Don't Know (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

How would you rate the financial situation in your household? (READ CHOICES 1-

- 1 Excellent
- 2 Good
- 3 Fair
- 4 Poor
- 8 Don't Know (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

In the last two years would you say the financial situation in your household has gotten better, worse, or stayed about the same?

- 1 Better
- 2 Worse
- 3 Stayed about the same
- 8 Don't Know (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

Now looking ahead, do you think that a year from now the financial situation in your household will be better than it is now, worse than it is now, or do you think that it will be about the same as it is now?

- 1 Better
- 2 Worse
- 3 Stayed about the same
- 8 Don't Know (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)